

Dear Senators,

Thank you for your many hours of hard work and to your attention to this very important bill before you. I appreciate this opportunity to comment on the bill to prohibit tire or hazardous waste incineration for energy generation. I am a family physician in private practice in Bozeman, Montana, where I have served as chief of the family medicine department at Bozeman Deaconess hospital. I was trained in family medicine at Northwestern University in Chicago, Illinois, where I was Chief Resident. I am also a clinical Instructor of family medicine at the University of Washington, and a Board Certified Fellow of the American Academy of Family Medicine. Since coming to Bozeman in 1996, I have delivered over 500 babies and care for people of all ages in my busy practice. I am deeply concerned about the effects that hazardous waste, tire and slag burning have on the health of the citizens of this great state. I have been involved with this issue because of the Holcim Cement Plant in our Gallatin valley. For 12 years citizens and physicians have fought hard to prevent the burning of dangerous wastes in their cement kiln. In particular I would like to discuss the concerns of over 60 physicians in the Gallatin Valley—burning of hazardous wastes and tires increases mercury, PCB and lead emissions, all of which pose a threat to the people of Montana. This bill would ensure the health and safety of our citizens.

Last year the Department of environmental Quality prepared an EIS on tire burning at the Holcim cement plant that was clearly flawed and inadequate. We need this bill for the following reasons.

Hazardous waste and tire burning increases mercury emissions. It is a known fact that mercury has powerful and negative effects on human health. Methylmercury is highly toxic, especially to developing babies. Children of women exposed to methylmercury during pregnancy exhibit a variety of abnormalities including delayed onset of walking, talking, reduced neurological test scores and delays and deficits in learning ability. In other words, fetal mercury exposure causes ADD, autism, mental retardation and learning disabilities. This is the reason mercury has been removed from vaccines, thermometers and dental amalgams. It is unsafe and unwise to now allow industry to increase our exposure to mercury by burning unsafe fuels. We already have fish advisories on every body of water in Montana warning women and children to limit or avoid fish consumption due to mercury pollution. It is my hope that this bill will assist medical doctors to decrease citizens' exposure to mercury. It is simply unconscionable to allow hazardous waste and tire burning in a time when we are well aware of the medical dangers and all the bodies of water in our state are already contaminated.

Hazardous waste and tire burning increases PCB emissions. ADD has increased by 50% in the US since 1970. Autism has increased tenfold in the last 20 years. The CDC estimates that at least 30% of these increases are environmental and preventable. Mercury and PCB are toxins contributing to these increases. Prenatal PCB exposure causes decreases in memory, reflexes, attention and intelligence. Furthermore these effects are permanent. PCB's are industrial chemicals that have been banned in the US. PCB's also interact with mercury synergistically to magnify their effects. In some studies PCB emissions increased with the burning of tires by 3100%. This bill would ensure that our citizens' exposure to PCBs would not be increased by the burning of hazardous fuels.

Hazardous waste and tire burning increases lead emissions. We have known since the 1940's that lead interferes with normal brain development. Numerous medical studies confirm that lead exposure in children causes ADD, increases in impulsiveness and aggression, and decreases in intelligence and school performance. It is now known that there is no threshold for

lead induced impairment. The CDC estimates that over 310,000 children in the US have unsafe blood lead levels despite the removal of lead from gasoline, pencils and paint. Physicians in our valley were very concerned when we learned that Holcim began using East Helena ASARCO slag from a lead smelter and a superfund site in their kiln. Thus far we have not been able to stop them from using this hazardous waste. The Gallatin County Board of Health conducted a lead study 13 years ago demonstrating very little lead pollution in the Gallatin Valley. Yet now we have results from a pilot study conducted in the last three years showing increases in lead levels in our valley. This small sample study was concerning enough for the NIH to grant a four year study on lead levels for over 300 children in the Gallatin Valley. We need to be certain that these new elevations are not caused from the burning of slag. Despite this important information slag continues to be used at the Holcim cement plant and now they want to burn tires as fuel and further increase citizens' exposure to lead.

Over 60 physicians in the Gallatin Valley are opposed to hazardous waste and tire burning as fuel. Please pass this important bill that will help to reduce our exposure to mercury PCBs and lead.

Sincerely,  
Colette G. Kirchhoff M.D.